



St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*

# Vision

A publication of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW  
AUTUMN/WINTER 2011

OZANAM LEARNING CENTRE

**CAROLINE CHISHOLM  
CENTRE**

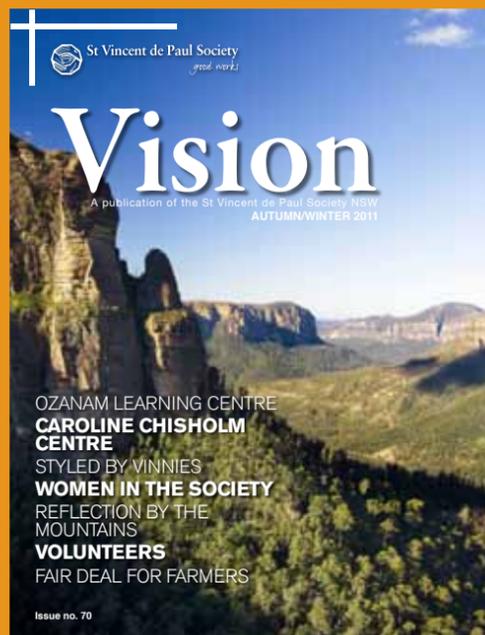
STYLED BY VINNIES

**WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY**

REFLECTION BY THE  
MOUNTAINS

**VOLUNTEERS**

FAIR DEAL FOR FARMERS



Vision is produced by the Community and Corporate Relations department, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, and is distributed free of charge through the Society to Catholic parishes, schools and relevant entities in NSW.

**Supervising Editor:** Julie McDonald

**Editor:** Yolanda Saiz

**Art Director:** Claudia Williams

**Contributors:** Andy Marks, Kate Scholl, Jedi Karanja, Bill Johnston, Claire Pentecost, Frances Roqueza, Maxine Morrison, Suzie Stollznow

**Distribution:** Ozanam Industries, a Special Work of St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (02) 9807 4066 [www.ozanamindustries.org.au](http://www.ozanamindustries.org.au)

**All correspondence and contributions can be sent to:**

Publications and Design Coordinator  
Community and Corporate Relations  
St Vincent de Paul Society  
PO Box 5, Petersham NSW 2049  
Email: [publications@vinnies.org.au](mailto:publications@vinnies.org.au) Phone: (02) 9560 8666

**Provisional Board:** Beverley Kerr (Chair), John D'Souza, Tony Muir, Tony Thornton, Teresa Wilson.

**Central Council Presidents:** Kerry Muir, Gillian Ferguson, John Donnelly, Kevin Walsh, Des Goonan, Col Parker, James McLaughlin, Barry Jones, Vince Toohey, Cynthia Fenemore.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in Vision are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Responsibility for the content of this publication is taken by Julie McDonald, CCR Manager.

© St Vincent de Paul Society NSW 2011 ABN: 46 472 591 335

**We'd love to hear what the Society is doing in your area. Send us a letter or email, or call with an idea for a story or news piece: [publications@vinnies.org.au](mailto:publications@vinnies.org.au) or (02) 9560 8666.**



- 4 NEWS
- 10 YOUTH
- 20 WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY
- 25 VOLUNTEERS
- 28 SOCIAL JUSTICE
- 30 SPIRITUAL REFLECTION



*Dear friends,*

*It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this edition of Vision, which will tell of the many good works of the St Vincent de Paul Society's members, volunteers and staff.*

*As we reflect on Easter, it is important to remember that while many people think Christmas is the most important day in the Catholic liturgical calendar, from the earliest days of the Church, Easter has been considered the central Christian feast. As Saint Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:14, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain".*

*At this time of the year we should reflect on the death and resurrection of our saviour Jesus Christ. Through his resurrection He brought us the promise of new life. As you go about your work, expressing your faith through service to the poor, you also offer many of the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in our community hope for a new life.*

*I am pleased to say we had an overwhelming response to the St Vincent de Paul Society's Flood Appeal. Countless donations have been made and many good Samaritans have been holding their own fundraisers to raise money for the Appeal.*

*It is with pride that I speak of the outstanding work being done by Conference members in small towns and large cities to help rebuild the lives of those devastated by these floods. On the frontline, funds have been used to assist teams of volunteers visit flood affected households to assess needs on a case-by-case basis and replace household goods and school necessities. In New South Wales, disaster works are an extension of the inspirational Conference work already taking place. On page 4 you can read more about this important helping hand.*

*On page 28 you can read about the struggles of our state's dairy farming community due to the impact of unfair retail competition. The Society's Rural Taskforce has travelled extensively throughout the state, listening to the heartache experienced by countless rural communities, sharing compassion and empathy.*

*With Volunteer Week around the corner, we take this opportunity to thank our many volunteers, who give of themselves selflessly to improve the lives of others. On page 25 you can read about the value these volunteers have on the day to day good works of the Society.*

*Finally, having just celebrated 100 years of International Women's Day, it is a pertinent time to reflect on the amazing contribution of the many women who have played a part in the Society throughout history. Many of you will know that St Vincent de Paul worked closely with St Louise de Marillac and in 1633 they established a small confraternity to help the poor and sick that would eventually become the Daughters of Charity. It was also a woman, Sr Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity, who inspired Frederic Ozanam to visit people needing assistance in their homes.*

*Today, across our many Conferences women play a unique role in helping change the lives of those people in need for the better. On page 20 you can read the stories of some of these women, including my own.*

*I hope you enjoy this edition of Vision, and see that together we are giving a voice to the voiceless.*

*Yours sincerely,*

**Beverley Kerr  
Chair, Provisional Board, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



**Dear Vincentians,**

When I first got involved with St Vincent de Paul as a 17 year old, literally on P plates, I had no idea what an important part it would play in my life and the opportunities it would bring.

Upon hearing that young people were welcomed into the Society, I felt that it could give expression to a desire to 'put my faith in action' and make the world a better place, one person at a time.

Not only has this experience led me on my life journey to the incredible opportunity to be the CEO, it is also responsible for one of the most momentous events in my life. It brought my wife Tanya and I together, when we met as youth representatives for the Society in Armidale!

It's not surprising that I often hear stories of people meeting their spouse through the Society or found that it helped cement their bond, for it brings together passionate, like minded people, who seek to work to make our world a better place.

The St Vincent de Paul Society is bigger than any one person and its spirit is not captured in any buildings, but shines through in the moment when two or more people meet in a spirit of friendship and see their neighbour in need as one like themselves. The Society has traditionally put this far more eloquently by pointing out that we serve Christ in those we assist.

It has been an interesting time for the Society, with many changes that have occurred since I joined, let alone since a young university student in Paris rose to the challenge to personally assist the poor and ignited a worldwide movement. And it is the fact that we are a movement of like minded people that sets us apart from many other organisations that also do great work in the community.

The essence of the Society rests with its members. I see an important part of my role is not only to support members, but to help you welcome and create ways for new members to take up our work, especially young people. The Society has always believed in the Spirit of Youth, after all, Frederic Ozanam was 20 when he founded the Society and only 40 when he died. As such I plan to be out listening and available to members as much as possible to help you create these opportunities.

Our message is a radical one, rooted in the Gospels; that no one deserves to live in poverty, that we are all called to this struggle and that in serving the poor, we are seeing Christ at his most vulnerable and are touched by his presence. This makes our work extremely challenging but infinitely rewarding.

**Graham West**

graham.west@vinnies.org.au

## VINNIES FLOOD APPEAL FUNDS AT WORK

**We have seen many images and heard many stories of the resilience and mateship displayed by people in Queensland and across the country during the recent devastating disasters. The St Vincent de Paul Society has seen this first-hand, overwhelmed by the enormous support for its Flood Appeal.**

The Society has a longstanding presence on the ground in the flood affected areas, and continues to provide food, clothing, petrol vouchers, furniture, bedding and linen to people in need.

Funds raised from the Flood Appeal have already been put to good use. In Queensland, the funds have been used to: assist teams of volunteers visit flood affected households to assess needs on a case-by-case basis; assist households replace necessities such as refrigerators

and stoves, kettles and microwaves; and help families replace school necessities such as new books, computers and uniforms.

In New South Wales, disaster works are an extension of the Conference work already taking place.

In the difficult weeks and months ahead, the rebuilding of homes, streets and whole communities will take place. Long after the headlines have disappeared, the Society will be there offering assistance, compassion and friendship.



Vinnies Centre, Bundaberg



## WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY

**Despite being one of eight children surrounded by the hustle and bustle of a busy home, Jacinta vividly remembers witnessing the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society at just nine years of age. Her father was a dedicated Vincentian and she says seeing her father help in this way made her want to do her bit when she got older.**

"I had a look at the Vinnies website and decided that leaving a gift in my Will was the best way to ensure that Vinnies is able to keep doing what they do best – help people".

It was through such a bequest that Bailly House, a service for people trying to get back on their feet after a period of homelessness, was borne. With this bequest one compassionate family is providing hope and a second chance to homeless people for years to come.

Not everyone is in a position to leave a house, but even a small legacy could make a real difference to the lives of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in our communities.

When preparing your Will it is important to have your legal and financial affairs in order. With this in mind, The St Vincent de Paul Society is offering a complimentary booklet, 'Mapping Your Assets' which includes a helpful set of guidelines to ensure you are heading in the right direction when organising your assets.

For your free copy or more information on 'Mapping Your Assets' please contact the Bequests Team on 02 9568 0234 or email [bequests@vinnies.org.au](mailto:bequests@vinnies.org.au).

## VINNIES ELECTS NEW NATIONAL PRESIDENT

**Anthony Thornton was recently elected as the new President of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia, and is looking forward to listening to the people on the ground, working closely with them to build a more just and compassionate Australia.**



The Shanghai-born Canberran has been a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society for 17 years, and has also been awarded an MBE for his service in the RAAF. Mr Thornton was formerly the President of the Society's Canberra-Goulburn Central Council and, more recently, the Society's National Secretary.

"We are ordinary people lending a hand to anyone in need. We've never done this with any fanfare and we're not about to start. We will, however, continue to be a strong voice for the people who have been pushed to the edges of Australian society: people doing it tough on pensions and benefits, people in low-paid work, people who are homeless, people who live with a mental illness, asylum seekers and members of the First Peoples who have been dispossessed and excluded," said Mr Thornton.

Mr Thornton will be leading the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia for the next four years.

### COMPEER IS A MENTAL HEALTH FRIENDSHIP PROGRAM

whereby volunteers are matched in 1:1 friendship with a person living with a mental illness. Compeer Programs are currently operating in Sydney (Blacktown, Chatswood, Hurstville & Lewisham), Illawarra-Shoalhaven, Macarthur-Wingecarribee & Newcastle.

If you would like someone to attend an upcoming meeting to brief members about the Compeer program, please contact **Loretta Nichols (Compeer NSW State Coordinator) on (02) 9568 0246.**



## ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDALS FOR LITHGOW CONFERENCE MEMBERS

On Australia Day 2011, Lithgow St Vincent de Paul Society workers, Pat Okon and Margaret Kennedy were honoured with Order of Australia medals.

This means that the St Vincent de Paul Society St Patrick's Conference in Lithgow now has three active members who have been awarded Order of Australia honours as Margaret's husband, Alan, received an OAM in 2004.

These three members are not only active in the St Vincent de Paul Society but also Family Support, Neighbour Centre, Meals on Wheels, Women's and Community Housing, Community Consultative Committees as well as school, church and show committees.

We congratulate Pat, Margaret and Alan for their ongoing support for people in need.



## OUR BRIAN IS INVERELL CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Brian Baldwin is a humble and quiet achiever who has never sought recognition for his good deeds. Recently however, his years of tireless and selfless dedication to helping others, was recognised when he was awarded the Citizen of the Year in Inverell Award during the Australia Day Honours.

Brian moved to Inverell in 1958 to embark on a career as a Stock and Station Agent, a career in which he has excelled, selling stud stock throughout NSW and Queensland.

But it is for his community minded work that Brian is best known. He has been an active member of the St Vincent de Paul Society for over 50 years where he

wears many hats including: coordinator for the Inverell Emergency Relief and the Rural Task Force; Member of the Sacred Heart Conference; and North Eastern Regional President.

Outside of the Society, Brian also gives freely of his time to organisations such as the Apex and Rotary Clubs, and is President of the Inverell Jockey Club. It seems that Brian always has time for more.

Brian's intellectual energy, his hospitality and the joy he finds in his charity work should resonate through all our lives. All members of the Society in the Armidale Diocese congratulate Brian for his Citizen of the Year Award.

– Joy Howe, Armidale Central Council Office



## VINNIES VOLUNTEERS PICK UP SENIORS WEEK AWARDS

Two Vinnies volunteers were recently recognised for their outstanding commitment to community service and volunteering at the NSW Seniors Week Achievement Awards. Ken Curtis and Brother Phil Redding won awards for their ongoing participation at the Mary MacKillop Outreach (MMO) Men's Shed Program.

The St Vincent de Paul Society service offers support for people who have a mental illness or disability by providing access to social, recreational and educational programs. Ken and Brother Phil's supervisors at the MMO described them as a huge asset to the organisation, and always ready with a smile when reaching out to people in need.

Through the Men's Shed, they have been involved in projects such as the construction of a resource building at Summer Hill Community Garden, the restoration of heritage listed furniture and the creation of practical items for charities, childcare services and nursing homes. We congratulate Ken and Brother Phil on this outstanding achievement.



## GRIFFITH SACRED HEART LADIES' DAY CONFERENCE

The Griffith Sacred Heart Ladies' Day Conference was founded in 1975 and continues its good work in the community. The Conference participates in most parish events and has had a long commitment to the healing Mass held monthly at the Pioneer Nursing Home. Most members do interviews, and will visit the sick, lonely or people in need in hospital, nursing homes or at home.

Starting the year energised and inspired by Matthew 25: 31-46, which says "that whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, consider it done for me", they held their first conference meeting for 2011 in early February.

The day started with the welcoming of parish priest Father Andrew Grace as the new spiritual advisor. It was also a day to celebrate milestones with a special celebration for Val Barry who was turning 80. The group took the opportunity to pose for some photos with Val and a few other members who had also turned 80 in the previous year.

Later in February, with the help of the Men's Conference, they were able to hold a street stall. They sold fresh farm produce including rockmelons, oranges, pumpkins and ripe red plums at bargain prices. The ladies baked the slices and cakes which are usually sold as soon as they hit the shelf. A beautiful quilt, made by Vinnie's volunteer Larissa was also raffled. All in all, it turned out to be a profitable and enjoyable morning.

– Margaret Polegato the Secretary of the Griffith Conference Sacred Heart Ladies' Day

## FAREWELL TO SYD TUTTON 22 MAY 1937 TO 12 DECEMBER 2010



Syd Tutton, National President of the St Vincent de Paul Society sadly passed away on Sunday 12 December 2010. He will be remembered for living his life as a man of faith dedicated to social justice. A man of deep compassion, he followed the example of Jesus in taking the side of the marginalised.

Syd was a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society for more than 40 years. After serving as Victoria State President he was appointed as the National Secretary in 2006, before being elected as National President in early 2008. He was also a member of the board of the St Vincent de Paul Society's International Council General based in Paris, and was highly respected and loved by Vincentians across the globe.

## GENEROUS DONATION FROM THE VIETNAMESE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY



St Vincent de Paul Society NSW representatives, Beverley Kerr (Chair, Provisional Board for NSW State Council), Barry Jones (President, Sydney Central Council) and Graham West (Chief Executive Officer) met with dignitaries from the Vietnamese Catholic Community at Revesby to present the community with a certificate of appreciation.

The Vietnamese Catholic Community donated \$50,000 to the St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland Flood Appeal.

"We would like to thank our wonderful friends at the Vietnamese Catholic Community. The Vietnamese Catholic Community is always one of the first to put their hand up and assist our friends in crisis. We cannot thank you enough for your kindness and compassion," said Beverley Kerr.

Chaplain to Sydney's Vietnamese community, Father Paul Van Chi says that he is not surprised by the generous response, as many of these community members still remember the crucial help they received from the St Vincent de Paul Society when they arrived in Australia.

At the end of the proceedings, Father Paul offered the Society a heartfelt gift which included a collection of beautiful spiritual songs and an accompanying book called the Mother of Vietnam Country by Father Paul himself. It was a powerful symbol of the strong friendship between the Society and the Vietnamese Catholic Community.

**A HUGE THANK YOU to the members of the Australian Catholic Chinese Community of the Archdiocese of Sydney who donated a total of \$9,646 to those people devastated by floods in Queensland and NSW.**

## THANK YOU

The Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement Miller Division held a cupcake and sausage sizzle fundraiser in February and raised just over \$1,000 to assist the St Vincent de Paul Society's good works.



## 'LEND A HAND' FUNDRAISER

When Rhodelia Santos saw the images of devastation as the flood waters hit Queensland and New South Wales she knew she had to do something. With the help of social media, she soon set up contact with a handful of friends and started organising the 'Lend a Hand' fundraising event.

The event was held in early February and despite temperatures soaring above 40 degrees, around 150 people came together and raised \$2,000 for those devastated by the floods.

"I saw a lot of new faces alongside familiar ones from the local community. It goes to show how supportive people can be, especially for a great cause," said Rhodelia.

The event included an array of delicious food and a great line up of local entertainment organised by Rhodelia's friend, Eileen Maynigo.

Rhodelia was overwhelmed by the response to the event and says despite the challenges, it was well worth it.

"Just knowing that after all the effort you are able to make a difference in people's lives, is such a great feeling".



## SPOS GROUP GOES ONLINE FOR VINNIES

Huge thanks to the SPOS Group for supporting the St Vincent de Paul Society Christmas Appeal. Last December, the SPOS Group sent out electronic Christmas cards to reduce costs and consequently their carbon footprint. The SPOS Group managed to save \$2,000 by going online and kindly donated this to the Christmas Appeal.

If you have been doing some creative fundraising like the SPOS Group, we'd love to hear from you. Please email [events@vinnies.org.au](mailto:events@vinnies.org.au).



## THE WOMEN IN BLUE SUPPORT VINNIES

A big thank you to the NSW Police Force Spokeswomen's Network who recently presented a cheque for \$1,000 to the St Vincent de Paul Society. The Spokeswomen provide leadership, networking opportunities, professional development and referral pathways to women in the Force. They also engage in community and fundraising activities, donating the proceeds of fundraising to charity.



A BIG THANK YOU TO ROCHE who donated \$1,500 worth of toys to the Margaret Druitt Childcare Centre, giving the children a great variety of toys to choose from each day. Roche also donated three second-hand computers and new computer tables and chairs to the Centre.

## THANK YOU LETTER FROM THE MARIAN CENTRE

The Marian Centre generously received 15 electronic scooters and ten bikes with helmets from Thinking Ergonomix. Below is an excerpt from a thank you letter received describing the wonderful impact of such a simple gift.

To the wonderful kind caring thoughtful people who have given our children at the Marian Centre confidence, love, and adventure.

My name is Kathleen Gleeson and I am the Children's Services Coordinator at the Marian Centre. Your donation of bikes and scooters for our children who live in the centre and also for the children who are part of our Outreach Service was awe inspiring.

Our children and their mothers have wrapped their arms around our staff as they have been given the bikes or the scooters. Our staff are complaining of (but are actually loving) having 'repetitive hug injury', a much loved and wholesome injury to experience.

So please know the joy that you gave and the thanks we got on your behalf.

You have made hearts smile both big and small.

A simple thank you for your generosity, which I hope touches your heart. Your kindness is a gift that will be long felt in all our hearts.

From all of us at the Marian Centre

## TEEN LEADERSHIP CAMP AT TEA GARDENS

Earlier this year, a small group of kids and leaders spent three days together at the Great Aussie Bush Camp, Tea Gardens, learning about the qualities of a good leader, and the importance of being part of a team and respecting one another.

This camp was part of the St Vincent de Paul Society's Maitland/Newcastle's first Teen Leadership camp for participants aged 13-15 years.

The days were filled with plenty of fun outdoor activities which called on participants to use initiative, strategy and teamwork to achieve their goals. Night activities involved an affirmation session where the worth and strengths of each person on camp were acknowledged.

Importantly, the weekend was also about continuing friendships established in primary school and modelling the love and care of young volunteers as the future leaders of Vinnies Youth. Those who attended the camp say that the memories will remain in their hearts for a long time to come.

It is intended that the foundation laid at this inaugural camp will be built upon over the coming years with Teen Buddies Days, an idea planned by the participants over the weekend camp.



Maitland/Newcastle Vinnies Youth leaders Aaron and Keane get involved in mud world commando course

## LEARNING ABOUT CHOICES AT LISMORE

Lismore Vinnies Youth ran an Immersion program called "Some Choices can be Deadly" in Bowraville over four days in January. The aim of the program is to build cultural understanding, giving local children and teenagers the opportunity to gain skills in sport, art and dance within their community during school holidays. Local Aboriginal Elders from the Gumbaynggirr tribe ran workshops, and Judge Wayne Evans, Dr Vivienne Tedeschi and Police Youth Liaison Officers spoke on a range of topics. The program was a major success and will be run in Yamba in the July school holidays.



## A POEM ABOUT VINNIES CAMPS

By Dominica Roebuck, Port Macquarie 2010

*Vinnies camps are oh so fun,  
Good chance to meet and socialise with everyone.  
The kids are great and run around,  
It's not until 12 o'clock that you can't hear the sound,  
Of happy kids having a good time.  
Living an experience that is oh so sublime,  
So join Vinnies to help out in your community.  
And be surrounded by friends with a great sense of unity.*

## KIDS CAMP FUN AT ARCADIA

Thirty-two energetic children and 18 dedicated volunteers from the Broken Bay Diocese attended the Kids Camp at Vision Valley Recreation Centre in Arcadia from 17 - 21 January.

The children participated in swimming, craft, canoeing and archery. Highlights of the week included horse-riding and countless rides on the waterslide, and, to top it all off, a visit by a clown who taught the participants how to do magic tricks! The kids were also treated to a science show and a visit to an animal farm. There was never a dull moment, and the jam-packed week left everyone (especially the camp leaders) exhausted.

A big thank you from the Broken Bay Youth staff to the Conferences and Special Works for their referrals, and to the camp leaders who selflessly gave up their week to make sure everyone had a great time. Special thanks to Matt and Vanessa, our trusty camp coordinators and our great director Kate, who spent much time planning, organising and leading the group throughout the week.



Picture- L-R Camille Pulanco, Kristina Touma, Vanessa Bailey, Matthew Savelberg and Sarah Daaboul

## MINI VINNIES AT ST. AMBROSE

Our Mini Vinnies group comprises of 92 children from Years 2, 3 and 4. The children have been more than up to the challenge, and have given generously and cheerfully in their lunch hour gatherings.

Originally, the children were enthusiastic about raising money for a variety of causes, but after leading them in prayerful reflections on the way in which St Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam attended to the mission of Christ by walking the streets and caring for those in need, they are now turning their minds to how they can give of their time and energy to those people most disadvantaged and marginalised in our local area and beyond.

Each child was given a personal profile of someone sick

and frail aged in the Parish community, and have written personal letters to them throughout the year and in a particularly personal way at Christmas.

They have also trimmed hundreds of used stamps ready for sale for the Josephite mission in Peru and for the Franciscan mission in the Pacific Islands. Their final project for the year was making some knitted 'Fred the Teds', knitted squares for rugs, embroidered washers, notebooks and bookmarks for the Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes sent to needy children overseas each Christmas.

- Sr Judith Clark, Bailly for the Mini Vinnies group at St Ambrose, Concord West



# VINNIES SUMMMER FUN!



## THE MARION COLLEGE

Vinnies group in Griffith held a silver coin Christmas Appeal raising more than \$300. Members of the group

then purchased fifty gifts for teenagers from Big W and donated them to the local centre. A home room household goods appeal was also held and as a result twenty hampers were donated to the local Conference for distribution to families in the local community.

**SUMMER CAMP 2011** was a great success with 29 children and 16 leaders enjoying a week of fun activities and relationship building while abseiling, canoeing and rock climbing. Thank you to all our enthusiastic leaders from St Augustine's Youth and Young Adult Conference, together with members from Mater Dei Vinnies Group, Wagga Wagga and our leaders who came from Bathurst and Lismore as part of our Camp Leader Exchange Program.



**THE SACRED HEART MINI VINNIES** group in Tocumwal celebrated their final meeting of the year by handing over the presents collected as a result of their Christmas Present Appeal to local Vincentians for distribution in the local area. A majority of the students in the group are moving on to high school in 2011 and are keen to stay involved with Vinnies. Plans are underway to recruit new members in 2011 to continue the good works.

**XAVIER CONFERENCE IN ALBURY**, in conjunction with their School Representative Council, held a Christmas Appeal in which donations and presents were offered as part of the end of year Mass. As a result, they were able to donate \$1,592.50 and many wonderful gifts including phone cards, gift vouchers and personal and household goods to local youth and community members in need. This year Xavier Conference students are hoping to assist St Anne's Primary School with a regular service program; hold social activities with Quamby House residents on a quarterly basis; and volunteer on Buddies Days and Kids Camps.



## NEW VINNIES CLUB AT UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Vinnies Youth Wollongong made history in February after launching the first St Vincent de Paul Society Club at the University of Wollongong (UOW).

The relationship with UOW began last year when Vinnies Youth were involved with Anti-Poverty Week at the University. With the relationship formed, it was decided that, given the limited amount of local volunteering opportunities available through UOW, a St Vincent de Paul Society Club should be looked in to. The idea was strongly encouraged by both students and University staff.

A Bailly was appointed by the local Regional Council to provide communication and support between the UOW Club and the local Conferences.

The Club quickly formed and begun work on their first activity, "O-Week". Over three days volunteers and members recruited more than 80 potential volunteers to join the Society either through the University Club or externally in our Centres and Special Works. This was a huge success and the Club Executive Team is enthusiastic about future activities.

The St Vincent de Paul Society Club aims to educate the student body on social justice issues. The club promotes and runs volunteering opportunities for students and acts as a reference point for anyone requiring additional assistance from the Society.



## BAKING UP A STORM AT CARINGBAH

To finish the year, a bunch of us from Vinnies Penshurst went down to Woolworths Caringbah in December to bake over 6,000 cookies. Not a regular Wednesday night!

We made the cookies to raise money for our future Buddies Days, where disadvantaged children in our community have a fun and stress free day out once a month.

We would like to give a huge thanks to Woolworths Caringbah Bakery Manager, Mitchell Greatorex, who kindly supplied the space and all the resources, as well as taught us the correct food handling procedures.

Teams were very hands on, traying up the cookies, putting them on racks, baking them, and then wrapping them.

We would like to thank all who helped out in any way prior to the night, on the night and in distributing the cookies. It was amazing to see the dedication and the enthusiasm from everyone.

We raised almost \$1,800, and would never have been able to do it all ourselves and we appreciate all your efforts.

*- Kat & Bridge, Vinnies Penshurst*

### SHARE YOUR LOCAL VINNIES YOUTH NEWS

If you are involved in a Mini Vinnies, High School or Young Adult Conference or volunteer with a Vinnies Youth program, we would love to hear your news and stories and share them in Vision. Please contact your local Youth Coordinator or email [youth@vinnies.org.au](mailto:youth@vinnies.org.au)

## VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT

It has become an important date in every business leader's diary, one night that provides an opportunity to sleep out in the cold in a bid to raise awareness and funds for homelessness.

The 6th Vinnies CEO Sleepout will take place across the country on 16 June in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Canberra, Adelaide, Launceston and Darwin.

Already some of the country's top CEOs have pre-registered to take part in this signature annual fundraising event including: Ralph Norris, CEO Commonwealth Bank; L. Janusz Hooker, CEO LJ Hooker; Andrew Sayer, Director National Museum of Australia; Shaun Larkin, Managing Director HCF; and Ashley Spencer, Vice President Hilton Australasia.

The key message of this year's Vinnies CEO Sleepout is 'changing perceptions on homelessness', something that last year's event certainly did for a number of CEOs who slept out in the cold.

In a first for the Vinnies CEO Sleepout, many CEOs opened up to The Bench Diaries about what impact the event had on their awareness of, as well as their attitude towards, homelessness. Read about their insights in the boxes at right.

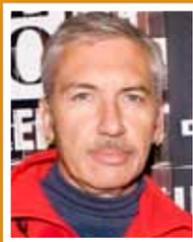
### FUNDS RAISED BY 2010 VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE

The \$2.9 million raised nationally by participants and supporters of the 2010 Vinnies CEO Sleepout has directly assisted people experiencing homelessness by funding new projects and assisting with the provision of existing homeless services.

In NSW, funds have enabled the ongoing provision of the Matthew Talbot Hostel food program that provides three hot meals a day to the homeless community, and assisted in the refurbishment of the popular roof top area of the Talbot.

Funds will also assist in the refurbishment of Edel Quinn in Wagga Wagga which will provide increased accommodation for single homeless men, and support the rebuilding of Freeman House in Armidale to a 24 bed purpose-built facility with a separate nine bed homelessness and learning centre.

#### Ashley Spencer, Vice President Australasia, Hilton Worldwide



"My view of homelessness has changed radically over the last three or four months. I was one of those guys who would never ever give either any money or time of day to anybody who would be sitting on the street looking for money or help. Up until a few months ago where I was watching a program with my family out of the UK about homeless people, it went over a series of three or four weeks and it really got me thinking about the whole homeless situation. Really tonight has reinforced a completely different view I have of how the people that we heard from tonight can just fall off life's ladder if you like, and find it very difficult to get on. People can in a matter of weeks find themselves in desperate straits and that to me was I think extraordinarily powerful".

#### Alyson Freeman, Principal Milestone Management Group



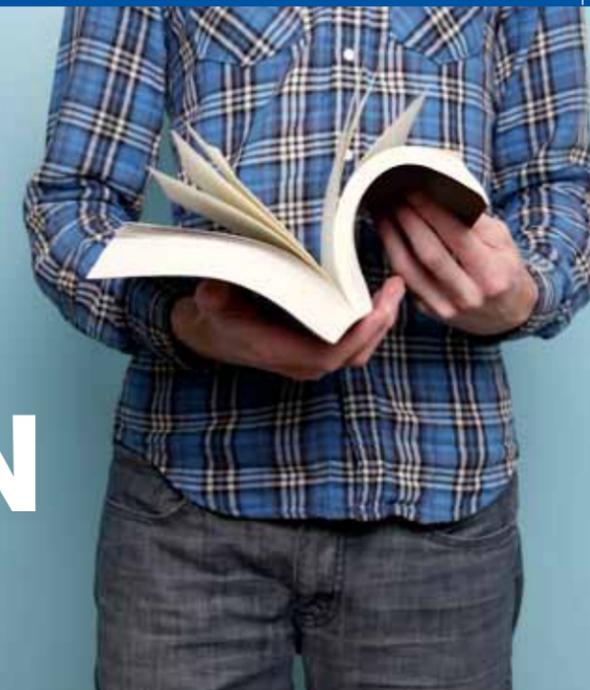
"This is the second year that I've done the CEO Sleepout. It is an absolutely sensational cause and the work that Vinnies does is tireless and is endless and a lot of times thankless. I'd just like to get everybody on board and encourage everybody to take what they learnt tonight back into their homes, back into their workplace and talk to people and raise the awareness out there".

#### James Ajaka, CEO Nudie Juices



"I guess I am one of those people that believe that if you work hard in life you can achieve many things and you're guaranteed certain things in life. What I've learnt recently is that it is not necessarily the case, and people are homeless not because they're lazy and not because they choose to sleep outside when they could easily go and get a job and stay indoors, but they are people who are suffering from situations or consequences that could happen to anyone at any time and that is the key reason why I am involved today. It's really raised my awareness and it's a problem that, we all as leaders, need to focus on and think about addressing".

## EDUCATION REVOLUTION AT THE OZANAM LEARNING CENTRE



Einstein once said that "all that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual". At the Ozanam Learning Centre (OLC), education is being used to engage the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in our community, giving them an opportunity to improve their lot in life.

In partnership with TAFE NSW a range of vocational and educational courses are offered including Creative Digital Media, Adult Learning and Teaching for Sustainability, and Basic Music Production.

The program is funded by the 'Partners in Learning and Community Enterprise' Federal Government grants to deliver outreach education programs in the community.

TAFE Outreach Coordinator, Guy Freer explains that the main aim of the program is to try and engage people in a positive manner.

"A high proportion of the people we work with here at the OLC have had a bad experience of education to date. We have to try another approach to engage them," he says.

Rather than simply offer basic how to do courses, the

"...the program tries to offer students skills that can lead to employment opportunities."

program tries to offer students skills that can lead to employment opportunities. Freer says that one of the great advantages of the program is that it gives students a foot in the door to further education at TAFE, and even University.

"Creative arts are often a good way to connect with people in the first instance – opening the door to other educational opportunities. When we say you are halfway through the door to higher attainment courses, we mean it," he says.

TAFE NSW has formed a great partnership with the Matthew Talbot Hostel and the OLC, with a Memorandum of Understanding existing between the two organisations to deliver these crucial education programs. Holding the courses at the OLC, away from an institution, is one of the great strengths of the program according to Freer.

"It's a great model, the two organisations working together. The openness of the OLC staff is crucial and makes it easy for us to get things happening," he says.

Freer said it is amazing to see the change in some of the students as they go through the courses. He explains that many of the students are people in crisis with their own identity, and a simple thing such as getting a student identity card means the world to them.

"You see amazing changes, one of our students even got off heroin in their bid to attend all the classes. Many people come to us with mental health issues, and alcohol and drug dependency; they have broken spirits that need to be put back together again," he says.

"We provide much more than education, we are looking at the whole person".

## NZ DELEGATION TOURS THE TALBOT

A visiting political delegation from New Zealand recently took a tour of the Matthew Talbot Hostel and Ozanam Learning Centre in a bid to learn more about initiatives and policies around homelessness in Australia.

The delegation was hosted by the Australian Political Exchange Council, a non partisan, Government funded council which facilitates visits of young political leaders between Australia and other countries.

Delegation leader, Tony Bates said that the holistic approach to homelessness and the quality and co-location of facilities was different to anything the group had seen before.

"The quality of the building services seemed more like a student hostel than a homeless shelter. The opportunities provided to clients and the non-obtrusive services approach was very impressive," he said.

However, most impressive to the group was the St Vincent de Paul Society's attempts to not split up families dealing with homelessness, instead offering family accommodation. When asked what new approaches to homelessness



the group had garnered from their visit, the delegates explained that the provision of creative outlets as a tool for developing self esteem and skills for clients, and meeting clients halfway and not just providing opportunities were some of the key lessons to be taken away.

"Whilst we don't have any similar facilities in New Zealand currently, the visit has given us something tangible to aspire to," added Tony.

over \$3 million in funding. This outcome is in no small way a reflection of the Society's good name, but it is also the result of good funding submissions.

Grants and Foundations Officer, Maxine Morrison says the key is in the preparation. "Where possible, Society services should make the time to see what's on offer. When you find a grant that matches your needs, take the time to read the application guidelines. Service managers should not hesitate to get in touch with me as I am happy to help".

"Although it may seem hard at first", says Maxine, "putting a good application together is really about telling the story of your service in a way that matches the grant criteria. Think about how the work your service undertakes is making a positive contribution to the community and everyone involved, including volunteers, clients and supporters".

Years of experience in pursuing funding has taught Maxine the benefit of having time to get things right. She explains that successful grants aren't left until the last minute. Those that work, generally succeed because they are based on good planning, strong evidence and most importantly a clear belief in what the Society is seeking to achieve.

**For more information contact Maxine on 02 9568 0211 or maxine.morrison@vinnies.org.au**



Volunteers at the Centre



Centre counsellor Lorraine Dailey

## CAROLINE CHISHOLM CENTRE: MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE EACH DAY

**The Caroline Chisholm Centre recently celebrated its tenth year of operation, but it is the difference they make to people's lives every day that should be the real cause for celebration.**

From its humble beginnings of handing out bread and milk to local families, the Centre has become a crucial service to those many families and individuals who come to seek help with paying bills, food vouchers, education and counselling.

The Centre is located at Emerton on the outskirts of Western Sydney which is home to a large number of public housing estates. Opportunities for people to make their way in life are few and far between. The average household income in Emerton is \$712 per week, compared with the state average of \$1,036. This exceedingly low income level is compounded by an unemployment rate that is more than double the national figure.

Over recent years, the Centre has experienced a marked increase in the number of people needing assistance including an alarming rise in the number of homeless. In 2008, just over 380 people coming to the Centre were homeless, in 2010 that figure rose to above 1,600. Sadly, many of these are families struggling to manage rising mortgages and rents.

John Stone has been the Manager of the Caroline Chisholm Centre since its inception ten years ago and says that almost all of the clients that come through the doors seeking help are struggling to make ends meet on some form of government assistance.

"Whilst they come looking for help with the simple things that most of us take for granted such as paying gas and electricity bills and buying food, their problems are almost always far more complex and far-reaching," he says.

The Centre, he explains, approach things holistically. "Poverty and struggling to keep ones head above water are often a sign of other emotional and perhaps mental crisis going on in the home".

Part of this approach is to offer a team of counsellors, educators and volunteers, each playing a crucial part in ensuring that those most in need are given a helping hand. Lorraine Dailey has formed part of that team for around two years, offering counselling to individuals, couples and families.

"It works very well here as we all work together to try and achieve the same outcome - a better life for those people who knock at our door for help," she says.

Lorraine speaks about the people she assists like they are old friends. She recalls a recent client, a single dad with a nine year old son, who was battling the demons of alcohol and drug abuse.

Paul has spent the past six years accessing services at the Centre in a bid to rebuild his life. Despite his struggles, Lorraine describes how Paul and his son share a very special bond. The young boy once confided in her, telling Lorraine of his admiration for his father. "I want to be just like my Dad when I grow up," he said, innocent to the pain and internal struggles his father was enduring.

In a bid to remove Paul from the temptations of his old friends and more importantly, old habits, Lorraine assisted him with a relocation outside of Sydney. Paul will continue to receive outreach including anger management and parenting classes.

Lorraine sees a range of clients, many of which she assists in dealing with DOCS, the legal system, Centrelink and Housing NSW.

"Caroline Chisholm Centre is about social justice, about the local area. We can't change the world but we can make a difference here," she says.

## PREPARING WINNING GRANTS



**The work of the St Vincent de Paul Society is driven by a commitment to the principles of social justice and the realisation of faith in action. While the motivation for this work comes from a desire to draw near to Christ,**

**it is undeniable that many of the practical outcomes members seek to achieve for the people they assist can only occur with financial support.**

While donations form a large part of the Society's capacity to carry out its works, grants and foundations are increasingly important sources of funding. The appointment of a Grants and Foundations Officer to the State Office in Lewisham just over two years ago has greatly enhanced the Society's ability to tap into this vital resource. Since that time, Society projects supported through grants and foundations have attracted

# STYLED BY VINNIES

Styled By Vinnies events are back to kick start Autumn/Winter with some Feel Good Shopping. Vinnies stylist Karmyn Pembridge has put together four key trends (shown below) and will showcase how you can achieve these fashion forward looks at Styled By Vinnies events across NSW. The campaign aims to show guests how to look good, feel good, save dollars, recycle and improve lives, just by shopping at Vinnies.

For more information, check out the new Vinnies website [www.visitvinnies.org.au](http://www.visitvinnies.org.au)



**MENSWEAR FOR WOMEN**  
50s, 60s and 70s glamour

\*All items sourced from Vinnies from \$5



**PRECIOUS STONE**  
Rich jewel tones and dazzling metallics



**AVIATOR**  
Edgy and sassy



**CAMEL**  
Elegant, sophisticated, timeless

## WELLINGTON CONFERENCE TURNS 100

**Congratulations to The St Vincent de Paul Society's Wellington Conference who celebrated their 100th anniversary on 29 January. Members past and present came together to celebrate the milestone at the Wellington Vinnies Centre and former manager Frank Lacey did the honours and cut the birthday cake.**

The Conference has been doing wonderful work in the community since 1911. They started with 19 members and since then, many more have picked up the torch to continue their vital work in the Bathurst Diocese. In 2010 alone, the Conference members assisted with 1,100 visits to hospitals, nursing homes and aged care rooms, supported 350 families with food, clothing and furniture and provided 100 Christmas hampers to families in need.

Well done Wellington and here's to many happy returns!



Former Manager Frank Lacey  
Picture courtesy of The Wellington Times

## SHOP AT VINNIES BY THE SURF AND SEA

**Amongst Balgowlah's cosmopolitan shopping area with lovely restaurants, coffee shops and a brand new Stockland Shopping Centre, you can now find the newest Vinnies Centre in New South Wales.**

The new Northern Beaches Centre boasts 150sqm of retail shopping and offers a good array of donated items to choose from including clothing, home wares and bric-a-brac.

The Balgowlah Centre does not sell furniture but is complemented by the Brookvale Centre just ten minutes away which is the largest Vinnies Centre in Australia and has 600 square metres of furniture to choose from.

The Balgowlah Vinnies Centre is still looking for volunteers to help at the shop. If interested please call the Centre Manager on (02) 9949 8249 to discuss.

The Vinnies Centre is located at Shop 1 & 2, 393 Sydney Road, Balgowlah.



## VINNIES CENTRE AT MT DRUITT OPENS

**A big thanks to all the locals who attended the Vinnies Mt Druitt grand opening at Zoe Place on 4 December 2010.**

# WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY

## Celebrating 100 years of International Women's Day

**Throughout history, women have played a significant role in the St Vincent de Paul Society.**

It was St Vincent de Paul who, concerned with the plight of the poor, joined with St Louise de Marillac and founded the Daughters of Charity in 1633. These women became the first order within the Catholic Church to be free to make home visits, and they dedicated their whole life to the service of the poor.

In addition to St Louise, another woman was instrumental in the first work of the Society. Sr Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity, inspired Frederic Ozanam to visit people needing assistance in their homes. Ozanam's Conferences of Charity became the St Vincent de Paul Society in 1833.

Since 1967 the women's Society has been amalgamated with the men's Society, working together to serve the poor.

Today, many women undertake good works in the Society from home visitation, to running Centres or looking after the homeless or aged. The kindness, concern and assistance women contribute towards the poor, sick, elderly and lonely makes them well respected and appreciated within the community.

**THE BIGGER PICTURE**

- The number of women executive managers in Australia is 8%
- The number of Board Directorships held by women is 8.4%
- The number of companies with no women in Executive Key Management Personnel roles is 61.9%
- The number of companies with no women board directors is 54%

— (The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency Australian Census of Women in Leadership 2010)



**RENE CAVANOUGH**  
Volunteer, Manager, Care and Assistance Centre

Rene Cavanaugh has heard a lot of stories in her time. Having run two country hotels, she is not unaccustomed to being a shoulder to cry on; when things got tough for her customers they often turned to her for advice or an encouraging word.

However, it's the stories she has heard over the past nineteen years as a volunteer with the St Vincent de Paul Society that have had the greatest impact on Rene.

"With all my life experiences, running country hotels and working in hospitality, this is the most satisfied I have been in years," she says.

Rene has spent all of her time at the Society working in the Care and Assistance Centre, which assists those people most in need through a range of services

including providing emergency food parcels, referring clients to counselling and other services, and assisting with energy and telephone bills.

Rene believes that the Centre makes a dramatic difference to people's lives. "A lot of people get a lot of comfort from the Centre. We give them self worth and listen to them, a lot of them have harrowing stories".

Despite all the people she has helped, there is one particular moment that stands out for Rene. She recounts a story of a man she helped get his life back together. With substance abuse problems, a divorce and an estranged son, the man came to the Society desperate and seeking help.

"It took patience, but eventually he was able to face his problems and rebuild his life. He reconnected with his son, got remarried and bought a house out west. It was wonderful to see," explains Rene.

"I always ask the people that come to see us, what brought you here? Often they can't answer but I think that God sends them all here".



**ILKNUR CHALOUPKA**  
Manager, Marian Centre

Ilknur Chaloupka radiates an inner calmness and positive outlook on life that is contagious. As she sits in her office at the Marian Centre, a St Vincent de Paul Society women and children's refuge, she is surrounded by symbols of eastern philosophy and Catholic mystics, testament to her belief that mindfulness and harmony are key to living a balanced life.

Arriving from Turkey in the early eighties, Ilknur experienced her own journey of homelessness. In her early twenties and with a ten month old baby, she found herself living in a refuge.

As she describes it, her real life journey began then. In the early nineties she completed her degree in

psychology, and became a counsellor. Ilknur has been working for the St Vincent de Paul Society for the last 18 years and says that she is devoted to the job.

"I think it was the divine plan. I have always been attracted to the logo of the Society. The cup was blessed by Christ's hand. The hand of love offers the cup to the one who is suffering. It had such resonance in my life," she says.

Ilknur explains that protecting and nurturing children is what drew her to the Marian Centre.

"They are such vulnerable little souls, victimised by domestic violence. We are committed to creating a safe and loving environment so they act from love not from fear".

When asked what the most significant difference is that the Society makes to people's lives, Ilknur says that offering love and kindness is the most important thing the Society can do, so that they can heal their wounds.

"I am very grateful to the Society for allowing me to serve the suffering. It is the most sacred job I could ever have".



**BEVERLEY KERR**  
Chair, Provisional Board NSW and President of Matthew Talbot Homeless Services

Bev Kerr describes herself as "a family person", and with 20 grandchildren and two great grandchildren, it's no surprise that family should play such an important part in her life.

Bev retired in 2001 after spending 20 years working for the Department of Community Services where she was involved in child protection, mental health, homelessness, disability services, wards of the state, adoptions and court proceedings.

Whilst Bev was always interested in Vinnies, she felt that with her busy work and family life, she had little time to spare. After retiring, it didn't take long for Bev to get the volunteering bug and she soon became a member of the Corrimal Conference.

"Because I have a social services background, I was interested in getting involved. I believe in the Society

and what it stands for – helping people," she says.

When asked what the most significant difference is that the Society makes to people's lives each day, Bev quickly speaks of providing access to education and life skills.

"I think education is very important, it can break the cycle of homelessness. I think it needs to start in the home. Seeing generation after generation of disadvantage, you need to break that cycle".

Amongst the most resounding memories for Bev is the work the Society does with the homeless, in particular men with children.

"During my time at DOCS men with children facing homelessness often had to be separated from their children in order to access accommodation. But through services like Vincentian House, men with children and families can be housed together".

That's what really stands out to me, being able to keep men with their children and families together".

Bev is also very proud of her role in establishing the Rural Task Force, which was set-up in July 2006 and continues to go out into rural communities and work person-to-person on the ground where it can be of most benefit.



“I feel safe, and being with other families made me realise I am not alone in this situation”

Amelie House for women and children escaping domestic and family violence and homelessness.

The service takes up to six families and provides casework, emotional support, referral to relevant services, family and trauma counselling, a children's tutoring program, and assistance with housing, immigration, and family law.

Manager of Amelie House, Rachel says that providing a safe environment is crucial to getting off to a good start in helping these women get back on their feet

“Many families arrive at Amelie House with the clothes on their backs, traumatised and distressed. Making them feel secure when they first arrive, means that families are given a great foundation from which to move to the next safe

## EMPOWERING WOMEN TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

Recently, the world celebrated the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day (IWD), putting a spotlight on the barriers that still need to be broken down in regards to achieving gender equality while celebrating the achievements so far. In 2011, close to 120 events celebrating IWD were held in Australia.

Despite the obvious progress made so far and claims that the glass ceiling was shattered long ago; the reality is that across the globe, women are still paid less than their male counterparts and are under-represented in boardrooms and politics.

Most concerning however, is the lack of access to education and health, and the growing violence experienced by women. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, around one in four Australian women surveyed, who had ever been married or in a de facto relationship, reported they had experienced at least one incident of domestic violence.

At the St Vincent de Paul Society we help those women who are escaping domestic violence, empowering them to break the cycle of abuse and rebuild their lives.

Behind the walls of an ordinary suburban house in Sydney, amazing things are happening. A safe haven is created at

stage of their lives,” she said.

Denise is a young mum who has been at Amelie House for some weeks. She fled with her child from an abusive relationship, desperate to offer her daughter more than she had been willing to accept for herself.

“The refuge staff have walked the journey with me, with support all the way. I feel safe, and being with other families made me realise I am not alone in this situation,” she said.

Like trying to put together the pieces of a broken vase, rebuilding the relationships between the mother and children, is often a painstakingly difficult task. Many of the children arrive at Amelie House unsure and upset, some have bad nightmares, and others don't even dare to speak.

Rachel describes how through family counselling and by simply letting these children be exactly that, children, many of them improve in leaps and bounds.

“They leave doing better in school, having a stronger bond with mum and with support services ready to assist them in their new lives,” explains Rachel happily.

This is when Denise pipes in. “I can now tell my daughter that everything is going to be alright, and actually mean it”.

## HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

**Working with people who have been displaced from their homes and separated from their families can often be difficult and even harrowing. Hearing the stories of migrants and refugees and trying to assist them in building a new life is no easy task.**

Despite the difficulties, there are many success stories that make it worthwhile such as the private school who accepted a young person unable to afford the fees, the family reunited after three long years of hoping and praying, or the client who, rejected from forty rental properties, found long term accommodation.

North Coast Settlement Service is a Special Work of the St Vincent de Paul Society, and is funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. The service is based in Coffs Harbour and Lismore and has Outreach services across the North Coast of NSW.

The service has been providing settlement assistance to migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants for over six years. All throughout the region you can hear personal stories about the help received and the vital role the service plays for people settling into a new community and country.

Migrant & Refugees State Coordinator, Suzie Stollznov explains that the service aims to enable newly arrived migrant and humanitarian communities to become self-reliant and participate in the broader Australian community.

“It is very important that they are able to develop a shared purpose and sense of identity through belonging, and that we encourage the broader community to be responsive to the needs of emerging communities,” she says.

In practice this may include such things as assisting a client to understand the rental market in Australia and advocating

“The service couldn't exist without the invaluable work of its volunteers, some of which are former clients.”

to real estate agents, liaising with Housing NSW, supporting a client to understand the school system or referrals to child-related activities where appropriate.

The service couldn't exist without the invaluable work of its volunteers, some of which are former clients. Their first hand experience of resettling into a new country means that they are able to understand the nuances of dealing with cultural differences, language barriers and adjusting to life in Australia.

“Refugees come to Australia with very little knowledge of our systems. Some have been living in refugee camps for over 10 years, and others have been living in remote rural settings. The role of the workers is to understand the needs of the client and help them to resolve those needs and have a positive settlement experience,” explains Suzie.





“Krank’n Studio is about, providing young people the opportunity to be the best that they can be”

They talk about how difficult it can be to get into the music industry and how punishing it can be on your back pocket.

“You have to have a demo to make it in the industry and at the very least, this would cost \$1,000. The best part about the studio is that it will be offered free of charge to young people,” Dane quips.

The equipment line-up includes an electric piano, drum kits, guitars, amps, an IMac supporting Cubase software, mixing desk and even a preloved guitar donated by ARIA award winning Diesel when he opened the facility last December.

Troy and Dane explain that the studio offers opportunity, hope for a brighter future, and motivation to turn to music rather than negative outlets of expression. Simply put, Krank’n Studio could make the difference in steering a young person away from a career in crime to a successful career in music.

Harriet, or Harry, as the boys affectionately call her, is the manager of Vinnies Youth Reach and to her the studio is part of the bigger picture to get the best possible outcome for the young people who come to Vinnies Youth Reach everyday.

“Many of the youngsters start off not being able to look you in the eye because they don’t trust you. Now, many of the kids come back to visit and volunteer all the time. I suppose we’re like mums sometimes,” she says.

“There was one lad who was a ward of the state. He was at risk of leaving school so we helped him through to his HSC. It’s difficult when you don’t have a stable environment to keep you motivated, but anything is possible if given the tools to succeed”.

Essentially, that is what Vinnies Youth Reach and Krank’n Studio is about, providing young people the opportunity to be the best that they can be and making a real and tangible difference in the community.

To make a booking at Krank’n Studio, please call (02) 9907 2604.

## REWRITING STORIES TO MUSIC

**Walking into Vinnies Youth Reach at Brookvale is like walking into an alternate universe brimming with positive energy. Sprawled across the walls are bursts of high voltage colour skilfully transformed into impressive murals, the word ‘Krank’n’ stands out across the back wall.**

Behind this wall lays Krank’n Studio, a fully equipped soundproof recording and rehearsal music studio, the latest addition to the Vinnies Youth Reach Centre.

Vinnies Youth Reach is a Special Work of the St Vincent de Paul Society that works with young people aged 11-24 years of age in different areas of disadvantage including homelessness, family-crisis, substance abuse and domestic violence. It is also a place for young people to find friendships, mentorship and guidance.

Inside the studio, two young mates, Troy and Dane are causing a ruckus.

“We’ve just completed some training on how to use the equipment and we’re excited about volunteering to help other people learn to use the facility,” Troy says.

Troy is a budding producer who likes experimenting with sounds that instruments don’t usually make. He’s effervescent and it’s easy to imagine that his music would inherit the same energy.

Dane is the quintessential rock star. His mane falls recklessly across his face and he wears the obligatory Beatles t-shirt.



## VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN MAITLAND/NEWCASTLE

**Volunteers are crucial in ensuring that the St Vincent de Paul Society can continue to assist a growing number of clients through our varied programs and initiatives.**

Denise Lucas is the Maitland/Newcastle Executive Officer and has been at the helm of one of the State’s most active Central Councils for 16 years and firmly believes that the great work of the Society should be attributed in great part to the contribution of volunteers.

Currently, the Maitland/Newcastle Central Council has 480 Conference members and 900 volunteers, with work being carried out in the retail outlets, homeless projects and on youth programs and buddy days.

“We have 12 employees and almost 1,400 members and volunteers, there’s a clear ratio difference. We’re tremendously grateful for all the work they do,” says Denise.

“There is a lot of great work happening on a variety of projects, but our youth programs are particularly appealing, as is the night care van. We have a strong disaster recovery program with well-trained volunteers across the Central Council area, and budget counselling is achieving good results”.

According to Denise, volunteers and members form the backbone of the Society. “They are generous with their time and gains a sense of satisfaction, not just in providing assistance, but also on a personal level.

Volunteering enables the development of skill and expertise. Importantly, a lot of our volunteers have also made firm friendships”.

## VOLUNTEERING AT THE SHOP FRONT

**At the Summer Hill Vinnies Centre, statistics attest to the important role that volunteers play in keeping the Centre running; over 82 volunteer hours are generously donated each week.**

Sharon Brunell, who has been managing Vinnies Centres for the past seven years, most recently at Summer Hill, said the camaraderie of the group is evident in all their work. With six permanent and five casual students and a mix of full-timers, the volunteers manage everything from arranging floor displays to managing the books and stock control.

“I do have a chuckle, as sometimes stereotypes can be evident,” said Sharon. “The ladies, mostly interested in shoes and fashion, like to merchandise and make sure our wares look good on the shop floor, while the gentlemen take care of the nuts and bolts, or the behind the scene work, such as ensuring the garbage has been taken out”.

According to Sharon, the group, while differing in age and background, take care of each other where possible. “Steve a volunteer who recently moved to Australia from Hong Kong, is well looked after by the other volunteers”.

In her experience of working with volunteers, the major success factor is that most have a real sense of community. Sharon says that the volunteers at the Centre help each other out, swap books and recipes and share what’s going on in their lives.

“Everyone in our store is loyal and hard working and it is an absolute pleasure working with them. Our store wouldn’t be what it is without their dedication, and those who come in, know that,” she added.



## MAKE A FRIEND, CHANGE A LIFE: BECOME A VOLUNTEER FOR COMPEER

The Compeer Program matches volunteers from the community with someone who has a diagnosed mental illness in a one on one friendship. Help break down the stigma and loneliness that can accompany mental illness through friendship & social support.

**For more information contact**  
[www.vinnies.org.au/compeer-program-nsw](http://www.vinnies.org.au/compeer-program-nsw)

# INSPIRE THE VOLUNTEER IN YOU

National Volunteer Week (9 - 15 May 2011) celebrates volunteers in Australia, highlighting the important role they play in our communities and giving us the opportunity to say thank you for their hard work and dedication.

Australian volunteers are essential to society, and many charities would struggle to survive without the support of their volunteers. Australian volunteers contribute more than 700 million hours of community service to many areas of society, including community health care, heritage and arts, environment conservation, emergency services, education, social justice and sports.

At the St Vincent de Paul Society volunteers and members play a crucial role in assisting the most marginalised and disadvantaged in our community.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- 34% of the adult population volunteer\*
- 713 million hours were volunteered in Australia\*
- Vinnies had 19,079 volunteers and members who worked over 2 million hours in 2009/10
- On average, each volunteer or member spent 123 hours volunteering for the Society in 2009/10

\*ABS Voluntary Work, Australia Survey (2006)



WE THANK OUR VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS  
FOR THEIR SELFLESS COMMITMENT  
TO IMPROVING THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

*"Experiencing the wonderful commitment of our members and volunteers collectively, over many years, in dealing with the highs and lows of the persons they assist, inspires me to continue volunteering in such a caring Society".*

– Margaret, Conference member, Alstonville

*"Visiting and helping through Vinnies has brought me back to life".*

– Mick, Conference member, Erskineville

*"Being a Vincentian gives me a lot of hope for the future, especially because I'm able to put my faith in action to help the future be a brighter place for all of us".*

– Eliza, Youth volunteer, Port Macquarie

*"Volunteering is about helping out people less fortunate than myself. It's about doing as much as you can in the time period you have".*

– Renee Whittaker, Doorknock volunteer, Wollongong



# SEEKING A FAIR DEAL AT THE FARM GATE

By Dr Andy Marks



**Prices are down! Low prices everyday! These are just some of the advertising slogans dominating our television screens over the past few months. If you believe the hype, it seems Australia's biggest supermarket retailers are in a race to the bottom when it comes to shelf prices.**

For many people, the promise of lower prices will come as welcome relief. This is particularly so for low income groups who are struggling to cope with a range of unprecedented cost pressures related to their food, housing, energy bills and other essentials. In the last year alone the Consumer Price Index (CPI), a statistical tool used to measure retail price fluctuations, revealed that the cost of fruit and vegetables (+15.5 and +11.4 per cent respectively) had risen considerably ahead of the inflation rate of around 2.5 per cent.

With post drought conditions and recent natural disasters undermining the production of a range of fresh foods, the reality is prices won't be down on many family essentials.

Some political and economic commentators would argue that the intense level of competition that exists between Australia's major retailers (often referred to as the 'big two') will help to reduce costs for consumers. Others argue that

the wholesale buying power of the 'big two' is forcing smaller retailers out of business, dominating the retail environment and blunting the supposedly equalising properties of competition by drastically reducing consumer choice.

The factors that affect retail pricing, especially those related to food and groceries are of course important considerations for people seeking to achieve affordable pricing arrangements for low income groups. Indeed, faithful to the principles of social justice and Catholic Social Teaching, the St Vincent de Paul Society has long argued against unjust economic structures that marginalise vulnerable members of the community.

When so much of the focus of media, government and the social services sector seems directed towards scrutinising price fluctuations in the nation's densely populated urban areas, it is perhaps easy to think that rural Australia, having emerged from the worst drought on record, is relatively unaffected by these issues. Unfortunately, just because the impact of unfair retail competition on rural areas does not make the front page of our newspapers, it does not mean the pain is not being felt.

The Society's Rural Taskforce, established in the midst of the most recent drought, has travelled extensively

throughout the state, listening to the heartache experienced by countless rural communities, sharing compassion and empathy, and standing alongside people in need. Taskforce members, the majority of them hailing from rural areas understand only too well just how real and immediate the threat to farming communities is.

The state's dairy farming community is just one of many industries struggling to survive under the exceedingly tough conditions imposed upon them by the 'big two' retailers.

The 'big two' have constructed a market among their suppliers that is so competitive that suppliers are forced to out-bid each other by effectively offering to pay a premium for prominent shelf space; nine times out of ten the freezer space is paid for down the line by the dairy farmer. This suits the 'big two' just fine as it is just another way they can increase their profit margins.

Go further down the production line from the retailers, through suppliers, processors and onto the farmer, and it is indisputable that one group is carrying the burden of this price war. According to one major milk cooperative quoted recently in The Australian newspaper, farmers in Northern NSW received just 51c a litre at the farm gate in 2009 -10, just 4c a litre above what it takes to break even. This kind of arrangement is untenable, as one dairy cooperative representative told a Senate inquiry earlier this year, continued discounting could result in the possible demise of the dairy industry.

A regulatory system that lacks teeth has meant that the 'big two' have shown no interest in compliance. The Federal Parliament's Economics References Committee took submission from farmers, processors, cooperatives and retailers until the end of February this year.

Interestingly, almost as soon as the Inquiry closed, the 'big two' launched savage price reduction campaigns on milk. In early March, the price of home-brand milk hit as low as \$1 per litre. At the previously mentioned ratio, this effectively reduces the farm gate price to the untenable price of 31c per litre.

The Rural Taskforce and the Society's Policy and Research Department will monitor the outcomes of the Inquiry and continue to advocate for a fairer pricing structure for our dairy farmers and the farming community in general.

The stand the Society is taking in support of dairy farmers is just one facet of the Taskforce's work. In coming months more investigation and advocacy will be conducted into the potential impact of irrigation buyback schemes and native vegetation legislation on struggling farming communities. Critically, the Taskforce also remains committed to addressing mental health issues in rural and remote areas.

**Dr Andy Marks is Senior Researcher with the Society's Policy and Research Department. If you have any comments, questions or feedback regarding this article, please contact [andy.marks@vinnies.org.au](mailto:andy.marks@vinnies.org.au)**



**“The state's dairy farming community is... struggling to survive under the exceedingly tough conditions imposed upon them by the 'big two' retailers.”**

# WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

Liturgical readings for this year concentrate on the Gospel of Matthew and in that Gospel, just before the narrative of the Passion, we find a description of the last judgment which is made completely in terms of the works of mercy.

Jesus' teaching on love of God and neighbour is presented in three elements.

We will be judged on feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, visiting those who are in prison. Love of neighbour is the same as love of God. The God of judgment identifies with those who are helped or not helped; "whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me".

When we apply this clear and unconditional message to the world of today, it can almost be overwhelming. As well as being aware of the immediate sphere where our lives are lived, modern mass media visually presents us on a daily basis with catastrophes and natural disasters, atrocities of disregard for human dignity and oppression of peoples, homelessness, inequality of opportunities and distribution of resources, lack of employment or even basic literacy.

But if we look closely enough, the good is there too. We have the opportunity as never before to appreciate the common identity we have in being human with all other human beings. In appreciating the oneness of the human race, we can be inspired by those whose selfless love for others exceeds anything we have been able to do. And then we return to the sphere of our own lives for practical action and our own recognition of our neighbour, there the presence of Jesus is unailing.

*God's Work sometimes appears to be very slow. Perhaps that is because we do not always appreciate the immensity of what we are involved in. Yet, precisely because it is God's work, the future is secure.*

– Albert Nolan, *Jesus Today*



# REFLECTION BY THE MOUNTAINS

Set amongst the mountains and bushland at Glenbrook, sits the beautiful St Finbar's Church. Transported from the old Sydney hospital its grand sandstone stands alongside ornate stained glass windows, its altar is simple yet striking – an amazing cross behind the altar made with the hands of the late Vincentian sculptor, Tom Bass himself. Step inside this picturesque place of worship and you are engulfed by the warm tones of Australian red cedar.

Surrounding the church is a path decorated with the Stations of the Cross, each adorned with ironwork in the shape of a cross fashioned by the hands of local parishioner and the Regional President of the Lower Blue Mountains, Vince Dobson.

It was at this idyllic location that around thirty people gathered to listen, reflect, sing and share their experiences of faith and commitment in the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

This dedicated team of Vincentians from the Glenbrook Conference were keen to share their experiences, and remind themselves of the real focus of their work – seeing the face of Christ in the poor and developing their spirituality and relationship with God.

Father John McSweeney led the group with a reflection "on the Emmaus Road". Each Vincentian then selected a stone and a word from the collection on the tables. The stone, a reminder of the journey of each Vincentian, and

the 'word' describing a quality that each participant needed to focus on as they travelled along the road of this journey. Music was integral to the day and Vince Dobson had selected a variety of musical pieces which would help each Vincentian focus a little more deeply on their spirituality.

The day was also a great opportunity for the Vincentians to reflect upon the work they do in the community. Spiritual Adviser to the State Council, Bill Johnston facilitated small groups giving them the opportunity to discuss elements of their work and share their many experiences, learning from each other in the process.

There was also a special visit from Anthony Taylor who volunteers his time as a psychologist at the Caroline Chisholm Centre. He shared his down to earth approach and tips on how to best assist the many people in need seen by members of the Glenbrook Conference.

After a day of reflection, the group attended the vigil mass at St Finbar's Church. During the celebration, two new candidates were commissioned into the St Vincent de Paul Society.

As each Vincentian walked away from St Finbar's at the end of the mass, they left feeling inspired at how much can be achieved by a few gathered together, and the importance of their work to those the Society helps – the marginalised and disadvantaged.



# Shop for a better world

It's not just the clothes  
that get a new life.

Everything you buy or donate helps people in the local community.



**Vinnies**

[www.visitvinnies.org.au](http://www.visitvinnies.org.au)